



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 12, 2016

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Exploring New Ways to Address Homelessness

Looking for new ways to address Los Angeles County's crisis of homelessness, the Board of Supervisors called for an analysis of proposed state initiative that seeks to invest \$2 billion to build permanent supportive housing for the chronically homeless who are living with mental illness.

On January 4, California Senate President Pro Tempore Kevin de Leon and a group of state senators announced they would pursue a legislative package dubbed "No Place Like Home." Its key provision would repurpose Proposition 63 or Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding, leveraged with other local, state and federal funds, to secure construction bonds.

In a [motion](#) that won unanimous approval from the Board, Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and Sheila Kuehl called the initiative "a good first step." Since many details of the initiative are still in the works, however, they added, "It is imperative that the County is at the table to fully vet this proposal to determine the impact to County residents."

"We should do everything we can to make sure we get more, rather than less, from this effort," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas told the Board. "This will help us in our work of trying to lift up our community and restoring dignity and purpose to the lives of individuals who find themselves homeless."

"This gives LA County, which contains 40% of California's homeless population, an opportunity to participate in the development of the initiative," Supervisor Kuehl said. "It can also help frame how the competitive grants will be allocated, and offers a real win-win by protecting mental health services while supporting the use of a portion of the revenues from Prop 63 for housing."

The County Department of Mental Health (DMH) already collaborates with the California Housing and Finance Agency to creatively utilize MHSA money, leveraging with federal, state, local and private funds. So far, these efforts have created more than 900 permanent supportive housing units for homeless persons living with mental illness, with another 175 units expected in the next two years.

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